Introduction to Game System Design and the Digital Economy Minitrack

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The gaming industry is the most important entertainment industry of the 21 century; reaching over $60 billion in revenue and far outweighing TV viewing amongst young people (Zyda 2007). With the innovation of online games, users are now connecting with other gamers every day and creating new communities online. Also games have been shown to be useful as tools for non-entertainment purposes as well. Serious games, and gamification are ways in which games can be used to increase productivity. Therefore, video games are big business and are also helping to shape businesses. With the wide reach and effect of games on our societies it is important that the research community seriously engage in studying this phenomenon.

The purpose of the minitrack is to provide a forum for researchers to discuss the business of video game either as a market itself or as a tool for business and society. The study of the design, use and impact of these games and game like systems in various contexts can lead to important research. Topics discussed in this minitrack include: game adoption, the use of games in organizations, and the changing business of video games.

The papers in this year's minitrack focus on the use of games and the study of games themselves. Games can in themselves be a research subject. As well, games can be used as a tool in business, specifically for education and training.

The first paper ("An Educational Adventure Game for Teaching Information Literacy and Student Engagement") by Myungjae Kwak, Alex Koohang, Kevin Floyd and Anthony Choi highlights an educational game that is used to train students to understand information. The paper identified that story elements and other game mechanics can be used to engage students. The students also showed a greater understanding of the material when they learned through the game.

The second paper (Heads or Tails? Network Effects on Game Purchase Behavior in The Long Tail Market) by Irfan Kanat, T. S. Raghu, and Ajay Vinze determines the factors that affect the attractiveness of video games. Specifically, the study determines the characteristics that are correlated with video game purchases. The study used a systematic analysis of the video game market called Steam to determine that dependent on its placement in the video game market, a game's multiplayer features and market share is correlated with purchase behavior. This was only true at the "tail" of the market, also known as the "niche" market. However, at the head of the market, ie. the most popular games, there is no correlation between purchase behavior and network externalities, multiplayer features, or the popularity of the game amongst friends.

We recommend these papers to your reading, and hope they will inspire your research and practice.

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